

## BOOK REVIEWS

CAVARNOS, CONSTANTINE, *Modern Orthodox Saints I: St. Cosmas Aitolos*. Belmont, Massachusetts: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1971. 71 pp. Frontispiece. Clothbound \$3.00; Paperbound \$1.50;

*Aphierōma sto Monastēri tēs Evangelistrias tou Plomariou tēs Lesvou*. Athens: Orthodox Press, 1970. 32 pp. Frontispiece and illustrations. Paperback.

It would be difficult to name a single American writer who has done as much for Greek Orthodox ascetical theology as has Constantine Cavarnos, distinguished teacher of philosophy and religion, author of *Anchored in God*, *Modern Greek Philosophers on the Human Soul*, *Byzantine Thought and Art*, and *Modern Greek Thought*, to mention only a few of his more outstanding contributions to Orthodox Christian literature. He has now embarked upon a truly significant project, a series of books on modern Eastern Orthodox saints that will include Macarios of Corinth (1731-1805), Nicodemos the Hagiorite (1749-1809), Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833), and Nectarios of Aegina (1846-1920). The first to be published in this series is *St. Cosmas Aitolos* (1714-1779), who was officially declared a saint by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople on April 20, 1961, and whom Dr. Cavarnos describes as "undoubtedly the greatest missionary of modern Greece" and "the Father of the modern Greek nation," a man who "played a role of supreme importance in the moral and religious awakening and enlightenment of the Greeks during the second half of the eighteenth century, and thus more than anyone else inaugurated the modern Greek era" (p. 11). Cosmas Aitolos has also been described as "the Missionary of the Balkans" because his work and influence extended to Constantinople, Albania, and South Serbia, as well as Greece. The *Analytic Bibliography of Cosmas Aitolos* (1765-1967) by Kostas Sardelis lists more than thirty books and six hundred articles on Aitolos, surely concrete evidence of his importance. Dr. Cavarnos has felt that an introduction to the spirituality of such men as St. Cosmas Aitolos needs to be made available in a convenient, inexpensive format, and has admirably inaugurated the series by providing the reader with an introductory essay on the main features of the saint's life, character, and teaching (revised and expanded from an article that originally appeared in *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 10:4 [1966]), with a translation of "The Life of Saint

Cosmas" by his disciple Sapphiros Christodoulidis, and selected passages from his teaching on such subjects as God, love, humility, confession, fasting, virginity, women, death, and Scriptures. A section of notes provides additional information and sources. The book itself is typographically a pleasure to work with and handsome in its simplicity. Professor Cavarnos has commendably inaugurated a series that will be invaluable for an informed understanding of modern Orthodox spirituality.

*Aphierōma sto Monastēri tēs Evangelistrias tou Plomariou tēs Lesvou* (*Offering to the Monastery of the Evangelistria of Plomarion of Lesvos*), with a laudatory prologue by the Metropolitan of Mytilene Iakovos, is a brief description of a monastery founded in 1919 by the hieromonk Chrysanthos Papageorgantēs of Trigonas that functioned as a convent with ten or twelve nuns for a decade. It is now in a state of disrepair, and since 1965 Dr. Cavarnos and others on the island of Lesvos have made a serious effort to restore this monastic complex to its original purpose. The other two sections of this booklet consist of a speech outlining the nature of Orthodox monasticism, with ample documentation from Biblical sources (both Old and New Testaments), and a collection of passages from modern Greek saints and scholars on monasticism, from St. Cosmas Aitolos (1714-1779) to the contemporary monk of *Between Heaven and Earth* fame, Theoclētos Dionysiatos.

These two little books, one in English and the other in Greek, are clear evidence of Dr. Cavarnos's continuing missionary and scholarly zeal in making Greek Orthodox spirituality well known to the contemporary secular world on both sides of the Atlantic.

—John E. Rexine

ARNAKIS, GEORGE G., *Epistrophē sto Aghion Oros 1963 (Return to the Holy Mount 1963)*. Austin, Texas: Center for Neo-Hellenic Studies, 1968. 171 pp. Frontispiece. Paperbound. No price indicated.

It is remarkable that in an age when institutionalized religion has been losing its effectiveness, the search for religious introspection and self-fulfillment has not abated. In the case of Orthodoxy, even though fewer and fewer people have committed themselves to a monastic life, more and more have become interested in the role played by Mount Athos in Orthodox Christianity, and a very substantial number of articles, books, and notices have been published on the Holy Mount at a time when the monastic population has declined significantly. No doubt a certain amount of impetus was provided in 1963 by the 1,000th anniversary of the founding of the Great Lavra by St. Athanasius.\* But the books and articles have continued, and so have the pilgrimages to the bastion of conservative Orthodox Christianity.

Professor George Arnakis, professor of History at the University of Texas and Director of the Center of Neo-Hellenic Studies, is one of those

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\*See J. E. Rexine, "A Survey of Recent Books on Mount Athos on the Occasion of the 1000th Anniversary of the Holy Mount," *Balkan Studies* 6 (1965), pp. 165-180.



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